

17 Apr 06

Raider Brigade Family and Friends: not sure how long it's been since I last sent an update. Time has been flying by – and the pace continues to increase (somehow). Every time I say to myself that it can't get any busier – it gets busier! But I am having a great time still as the commander of our brigade.

The weather here is slowly starting to warm up. It is getting into the 90's during the middle of the day. It's not unbearable by any means, but I think all are starting to wonder what it will be like in July at 115 degrees. We've been working for the last couple of months on what we call "heat mitigation" – a technical name for finding ways to keep Soldiers comfortable and equipment functioning in extreme heat.

Significant events since the last update are as follows:

- 1-66 Armor – along with 2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade, 9th IA Division – entered Tarmiya on 25 March and established a patrol base. I must admit of having some butterflies in my stomach as I tried to sleep at the brigade TAC on the night of 24 March. Things have gone better than expected to date – but much work remains here. Great work has been done by A Co, 1-66 in this town – led by CPT Bill Rodebaugh and 1SG Parker.
- 7-10 Cav continued a great partnership with 2nd Brigade, 9th IA Division. This included a command post exercise in early April, establishment of a combined patrol base, and countless combined operations throughout their battlespace. A personal highlight was a medical operation both 7-10 Cav and 2/9 IA conducted about a week ago that provided medical service to Iraqis on 11 April.
- 4-42 FA assumed responsibility for battlespace from 1STB earlier this month to allow 1STB to focus on project management. LTC Newman and 4-42 FA have done a superb job patrolling this complex area. They also continue with the critical responsibility of securing Taji for it's occupants.
- 1STB continues to provide a diverse set of services / functions to the brigade combat team. This includes route clearance, EOD escort, military police, unmanned aerial vehicles, signal interconnectivity, and other critical capabilities. Most importantly, I've tasked the 1STB with managing about 150 separate projects across our area of operation. Most focus on essential service improvements. We are off to a great start here – I believe the efficiencies we'll gain here will be of immeasurable help.
- 4th Support Brigade continues to provide the entire BCT with on time, first rate logistical support. I want to personally thank the Packhorse Soldiers for what you are doing behind the scenes to make things happen for the entire brigade.

- 1-22 Inf continues to do great things in support of 2nd Brigade, 101st Abn Division. I am extremely proud of LTC Craig Osborne, CSM Beale and the Regulars as they operate in a tough part of Iraq. They remain disciplined and focused on the mission at hand.

The Anti-Iraqi Forces (AIF) activity has increased along with the weather lately. It has been a tough week or so. We lost three great troopers in 7-10 Cav with two additional troopers badly hurt in the same attack. Subsequently, we had a Soldier in 1-66 badly hurt in an attack on Easter morning. I appreciate everything that the rear detachment and families on your end at Fort Hood and around the country have done to ensure our family members affected by these attacks have been taken care of. We are all committed to ensuring these losses are not in vain as we focus on future operations.

We continue to send a lot of Soldiers on leave. I hope you and your Soldier have planned a mid-tour reunion. Please be safe – we had a Soldier in the brigade hurt badly in a car accident about a week ago while on leave.

This place (Iraq) continues to be an incredibly complex problem. We are all spending a lot of mental energy every day on how to make our part of Iraq better. I believe we are making some inroads – though they are not easily measurable. I've found that comparing today with yesterday is an exercise in frustration. You can feel like you are taking one step forward and two steps back. I believe it is more important to focus on things that are impossible to measure on the daily scale. It takes consistent application of energy and a focus on established priorities. Chasing the crisis of the moment and losing focus on the long term objectives will result in a less than optimal result in the long run. I've seen us recruit thousands of police where we had no one volunteer when we first arrived. I feel relatively safe in some areas of our battlespace that overtly loathed us and the Iraqi Army when we arrived. I've seen the Iraqi Army continue to gain confidence and capability over time thanks to the hard work and commitment of the Raider Brigade Soldiers. These things can't be measured every day – but if you look back over time we have made real, tangible progress. You should be proud of your Soldier for this – and for what he will do in the future during our tour here. As I said before, I believe we're heading in the right direction. Every day isn't pretty. I have seen some things here I never want my children to see. But I believe we are doing things here that may prevent my children from having to see such things.

I want to reiterate my thoughts on being related by some means to a Soldier deployed to Iraq. I can't thank you enough for what you are doing on your end. I must admit that I would be very worried if my wife or

one of my sons were in Iraq while I was at home. It's natural to worry for the ones you love. But I know at the same time that I would be immensely proud if they were here – and would support them just as you are supporting us.

Finally, for all those mothers out there – happy Mothers Day! I know it's a little early – but I'm not sure I'll be disciplined enough to send another update before Mothers Day. (Liz and Mom: I'll try to send something – but if I don't this note will have to count for now and I'll make it up next year!)

Thanks again for what you are doing. Your Soldier on this end is serving proudly and making a contribution to a great team. If you have any questions on your Soldier, please contact me at james.pasquarette@us.army.mil.

Colonel Jim Pasquarette
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